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Colman McCarthy

This Is Some Peace Institute

Any lingering or wild hopes that the U.S. Institute of Peace will amount to something can now be scrapped.

On Feb. 25 in a congressional hearing room, the board of directors held its first meeting. The 12-member gathering was all male, all white and all safe. The first order of homogenized business for the assembled neocons, hawks and Reaganites should have been a call for a name change — from the Institute of Peace to the Institute of Passivity.

The newest federal creation took from 1963 to 1984 to move through Congress. Ronald Reagan then violated the law by waiting five months beyond the legal time limit before nominating the first board member. The institute's budget for the first two years is \$4 million, a sum equal to 1/200th of what the Pentagon spends in a day.

The purpose of the institute is a mixture of vague sentiments—"to promote international peace"—and the usual Washington wheel-spinning of holding seminars and creating a "clearinghouse" for information. The \$4 million will just about cover per diems and brochures.

The institute is chaired by John Norton Moore. He is a University of Virginia law school official and chairman of the advisory committee on oceans policy of the Republican National Committee.

Among the other appointees are these:

■ Bruce Weinrod. He is the director of foreign policy and defense studies of the Heritage Foundation, a right-wing roosting perch for full-feathered hawks.

■ Dennis Bark. He is an associate director of the West-Coast equivalent of Heritage, the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, at Stanford University. Bark served in the 1980 Reagan campaign as a member of the "task force on Western Europe."

■ Evron Kirkpatrick. This is the husband of Jeane. He is 74 and has bounced around since the late 1930s as a professor, editor, consultant and member of committees and task forces. His books include "Target: the World Communist Propaganda Activities."

■ William Kintner. A former CIA man and ambassador to Thailand, he is the co-author of "The Front is Everywhere" and the editor of "Safeguard: Why the ABM Makes Sense."

Now for the heavyweight peacemakers. The institute's enabling legislation requires board membership for the secretaries of defense and state, the director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and the head of the National Defense University. This explains the presence on the board of Richard Perle (representing Caspar Weinberger), Max Kampelman (representing George Shultz), Kenneth Adelman of ACDA and Gen. Richard Lawrence of the National Defense University at Ft. McNair.

These are men of integrity and intelligence who have doubtlessly earned all the honors that have come their way. But what are they doing on the board of a peace institute? Is Richard Perle, an assistant secretary of defense who is the hard-liners' hard-liner, a closet Gandhi scholar who secretly believes that soul force, not MX force, is the way to face down the Soviets? Is the general from Ft. McNair a covert student of Martin Luther King's theories of nonviolence? Is Kintner, the former CIA man, about to revise his book and title it "Why the ABM Doesn't Make Sense"?

America is rich with practitioners and theorists on the ways of solving conflicts by other means than violence or arms escalation. They range from Gene Sharp and Coretta Scott King to Joan Baez and Kenneth Boulding.

But to ensure that no heresies will get a hearing, chairman Moore said in his opening comments: "While seeking to end the use of violence in international life, we must not be misled by simplistic assumptions that foreign involvement or military strength are necessarily inconsistent with the pursuit of peace."

As the peace-institute legislation worked its way through Congress for 21 years, people who said it would end up a meaningless farce were labeled cynics. Sign after sign appeared—from weakening amendments to the demand that the secretary of defense be on the board—that the cynics were not that at all, but were dispassionate observers who understood theatrics.

The public is well-served by one provision in the bill. After two years, Congress can kill the institute. It should. The question for now is, where was Gramm-Rudman when we needed it?